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ETYMOLOGY.

THE NAME "CYMRY."

As we have not been favoured with any answer to the letter of LEOMINSTRENSIS, in our last Number *, on the etymology of the word CYMRY †, we feel ourselves in some respect bound to take up the question, and, more particularly, as the writer has addressed his objections, in a main degree, to the observations, that have appeared on the subject in these pages †. Our reply to these objections shall be as concise as the nature of the investigation may allow; but we foresee, that, with all our caution in this respect, we shall be under the necessity of trespassing, at some length, on the reader's patience. However, as the inquiry, although professedly philological, has, in fact, an intimate connection with the early history of this island, we offer no apology for the space it may occupy. As a question of etymology, indeed, we know of none, in which the Welsh reader can be more interested.

In the following answer we shall first notice, in a particular manner, the "questions and doubts" of our correspondent in the order, in which they occur, and shall subjoin to the whole such remarks, as may be suggested by a general view of the subject.

1, 2, 3. The import of these three questions, however they may differ in their phraseology, is obviously the same, and amounts only to this—whether there exists, amongst any other people, a precedent for this etymology? Now, in the first place, we do not think, that the discussion of this inquiry should depend at all upon precedent, provided a clear and rational explanation can be given of the etymology in dispute, supported by historical evidence. Precedent, in a case of this

* Page 205.

† It appears advisable to repeat, in this place, the etymology in dispute, which is CYN, first or primitive, and BRO, a people, "adopted either," to use the words of the CAMBRO-BRITON on a former occasion, "on account of a priority of descent from the *Noachidæ*, or of the CYMRY being the first race, that colonized Europe." We take this opportunity of mentioning, that the reference to the CAMBRO-BRITON in the last Number, p. 206, ought to have been vol. i. not vol. ii., as there misprinted.

nature, must be extremely difficult of attainment, and especially with reference to "the earliest inhabitants of the earth." The extinction of most of the primitive languages of mankind, and the overthrow or dispersion of those nations, by whom the globe was first colonized, throw a veil over the origin of most ancient names, which is not now to be penetrated. The CYMRY, in this respect, appear to form a singular exception; the very language as well as the people having existed, from remote antiquity, even to this day: a phenomenon, which, if fortified by the testimonies of history, ought to exempt their case, if it were necessary, from any dependence on precedent. And we cannot help here observing, that, when our correspondent asks, whether a custom ever "prevailed amongst the *earliest* inhabitants of the earth to distinguish each other as the first or *last* comers into a country," he is guilty of a little Hibernianism. For, surely, it would require some ages, at least, to ascertain, (if, indeed, the point could ever be said to be determined,) who the "*last* comers" were in any particular country. It is not likely, therefore, that such a designation should ever have been adopted; but it is extremely probable, that a wandering tribe, as yet without a name, should distinguish themselves, or be distinguished by others, as *first* settlers. And this must, moreover, have operated as a sort of permanent evidence of that prior claim to the country, they occupied, which they would naturally be desirous of establishing. Accordingly we find, that one of the most ancient people, recorded in Pagan story, the *Titans*, actually derived their appellation from such a circumstance, and were called by the Greek and Roman writers Γηγενης and *Terrigenæ**, names of

* The primitive or aboriginal character, ascribed to the Titans, by ancient writers, is so well known that it is almost superfluous to dwell on the point; but we cannot resist the temptation of quoting one or two instances. Thus, in the Orphic Hymns, we have the following lines:—

Τίτῆνες, γαίης τε καὶ οὐρανόσ τε κτῆνα,
Ἡμετέρων προγονοὶ παῖδες. H. 36. 1.

Titans, illustrious sons of earth and heaven,
Our sires' progenitors.—

And again, in the same ancient fragments, the poet, addressing the Titans, says,—

Ἐξ ὑμῶν γὰρ πάντα πᾶσι γένεα καὶ ἀ κοσμον

From you are descended all the tribes throughout the world.

similar import with the original word, according to its Hebrew etymology, and in which sense it is taken by Milton, when he says—

“*Titanian or Earth-born, that warr’d with Jove.*”

The name, therefore, like CYMRY, implies aboriginal, or indigenous, a character, which Cæsar is known to ascribe to the early inhabitants of this island*. Thus, if precedent were at all necessary, it may be said to exist in the name we have just noticed; but we consider it, as we have already said, by no means indispensable to the question. The etymology of CYMRY may securely be left to rest on its own merits, provided it have, moreover, what we think it possesses, the sanction of history in its favour.

4, 5. These two questions, although varying in expression, have also, like the three preceding, substantially but one object, and that is—the signification of the primitive term CYN, and its effect in the composition of words. And here again we do not conceive, that we are driven to the alternative, suggested by our correspondent’s question, of proving that CYN does “invariably imply first or primitive in point of time:” it is quite sufficient, that this is its primary sense, the other of *chief* or *principal* being obviously secondary, or what may be called figurative, inasmuch as the idea of preeminence has its origin in that of priority. And is not this the case also with the corresponding terms in all other languages? The objection, therefore, as to the abstract signification of the prefix CYN, must be admitted to be without any real weight: it only remains, then, to examine its force when employed in the for-

To the same effect also is the following observation of an ancient scholiast—Οἱ δὲ πρότερον γένεαν τοῦς Τίτῶας φασί.—Some describe the Titans as the first race.—Hesiod in his *Theogony* has likewise some lines to the same purpose, which the classical reader will be at no loss to recollect; but it may be remarked, that Hesiod has, in some respects, confounded the history of this people by supposing the Giants and Titans to have been a different race. However, his descriptions, in the Battle of the Gods, are often of historical value, and have obvious allusions to the first Dispersion. The Titans are supposed by most writers to have been the descendants of Ham and Chus. Sanconiathon describes them as *exiles* and *wanderers*; and Mr. Davies, in his *Celtic Researches*, p. 84, is of opinion that the same people are alluded to in the 30th chapter of Job, v. 1. to 9. to which we refer the reader.

* Bell. Gall. l. v. c. 12.

mation of words. But, ere we do this, we must be allowed to express our surprise, that so general, we may even say so universal, a feature in the character of Welsh compounds, as this use of the word *CYN* in its primitive sense, should have escaped our correspondent's penetration. So common indeed is it, that we feel quite at a loss how to make a selection from the multitude of instances, which may be adduced towards its illustration. The following, however, are a few:—*cynar*, first ploughing; *cynblant*, first born; *cyndad*, first parent; *cyndwr*, first growth; *cynddail*, first leaves; *cynddydd*, the first part of the day or old time*; *cynvam*, first mother; *cynwedydd*, first baptism; *cynvyl*, first boundary; *cynrain*, first lineage†; *cyn-taid*, first swarm; and *cyntevin*, first part of the summer.—These few examples, selected from amongst hundreds, will be sufficient, we hope, to set this part of the objection at rest, by proving, that the ordinary use of *CYN*, in a compound form, is first in time, and not chief in rank. To the two instances, apparently of a contrary nature, adduced by our correspondent, we have adverted in the preceding notes; and, with respect to his etymology of *Brigantes*, we can only say, that we never before heard that the word was deduced either from *Cynobri* or *Obricynta*. On the contrary, we have always understood it to be a derivative of the Welsh *brig* or *brigant*, a height, and, consequently, to be synonymous with Highlanders or Mountaineers, an epithet peculiarly applicable to the *Brigantes*, or *Brigantwys*, of this island, from the particular character of the country they occupied. And it cannot but strengthen this etymology to notice, that two other nations, inhabiting respectively the Pyrennees and the Alps, bore anciently the same appellation.

6. Hitherto our correspondent's objections have been con-

* We select this word, as it happens to be one, adduced by our correspondent in support of his opinion. *Cynddydd*, however, has, in a compound form, the import we have here given it, and may imply the "first day" as well as the *first part of the day*, notwithstanding that, in common conversation, "*y dydd cyntaf*" is used in the former sense.

† This is another of our correspondent's examples, which, however, proves nothing in favour of his opinion. We admit that *cynrain* may mean *first spears*, as a compound of *cyn* and *rhain*, but it also admits of the sense we have above adopted: and in both instances *cyn* may imply first in time as well as in rank.

fixed to the principle of the etymology under consideration; and we trust, we have sufficiently shewn their general fallacy. The question, we have now to examine, as well as those that succeed it, relates more immediately to the point in dispute. The substance of the objection, contained in it, is—that the admission of the controverted etymology implies, as a necessary conclusion, the immediate descent of the CYMRY from our first parents, and the consequent identity of their language with the most ancient speech of mankind. Now all this we deny: it is, by no means, a fair or a reasonable deduction. The CYMRY may be acknowledged as a first or primitive people, without any reference to an immediate descent from the first family, and, consequently, without involving the question, as our correspondent would infer, of “the rejected descent from Gomer.” The terms of the etymology, as quoted in a preceding note, are expressly in the alternative, assigning to the CYMRY a priority, either in their patriarchal descent, or in their colonization of some particular country, though, in confining that country to Europe, we, perhaps, contracted the question more than we ought to have done. However, it serves to shew, that the proposed etymology does not exclusively rest on the primæval descent of the CYMRY; but, even if we were disposed to maintain that alternative of the proposition, it would still involve no insinuation that the CYMRAEG must be “the most ancient language in the world,” unless it could be shewn, that there was but one language spoken after the Dispersion, and, consequently, that the Scriptural account of that great event is inaccurate.

7. Of all the objections of our correspondent this is decidedly the least tenable. To doubt the identity of the CYMRY with the *Cimbri* and *Cimmerii*, because “no mention is made of the former by the Latin and Greek historians,” is precisely the same as if he were to doubt the identity of the CYMRY with the *Welsh*, because the latter name only is used by English writers. As well too might he question the identity of the *Anglois* with the *English*, because the latter denomination is never employed by the French; or, to come more to the point, the *Ρωμαιοι* and *Romani* could never have been one people, because, forsooth, the Greek historians mention them by the former name only. In a word, there is no nation, ancient or modern, which

will not exemplify the complete futility of this objection ; but the few, we have adduced, will, we think, be sufficient. What we contend for, on this point, is this—that, presuming, as we do, the CYMRY, *Cimmerii*, and *Cimbri* to have been originally one people, the etymology of the two latter names may be accounted for on the same principle as that of the first, the Greek compound adopting a mutation of the last syllable, BRO, and the Latin name retaining it in its original form, without any change. And we are sure, our correspondent's recollection will supply him with numerous instances wherein the names, given by foreigners to particular nations, differ much more widely from that adopted by the nations themselves, than in the example before us. With respect to the "refusal of the Bretons of Gaul to recognize the CYMRY under that denomination," (by which we presume our correspondent to allude to their assumption of a different name,) there is nothing in the circumstance, that we can discover, more extraordinary than the loss of the patronymic appellation amongst other people "descended from the same original stock." The only matter of surprise is, that, after so many ages and through so many vicissitudes, the primitive name of CYMRY should still be exclusively preserved amongst the mountains of Wales.

8. The answer to the former part of the last question may serve as a reply to this also, since, upon the presumption that the *Cimmerii* and *Cimbri* were but one people, the objection is evidently of the same character. All it amounts to is this—that the nation is not noticed by any Roman historian till "about one century before the Christian æra*," but, although we hear nothing of it under the *Roman designation* previous to that period, surely, we are not, therefore, to infer, that the nation might not have existed for centuries earlier, unknown to the Romans. This objection, indeed, like the one preceding it, appears to be founded on an hypothesis, that the same people could not have been anciently known by various names, whereas the contrary is so obvious from the Latin and Greek

* We take it for granted that our correspondent here alludes to the famous *Cimbric War*, in which the Romans, under the consuls Manlius and Servilius, were defeated with great slaughter by the *Cimbri* and *Teutoni*. This happened, according to the best authorities, 109 years before Christ. Florus describes the *Cimbri* as a very powerful people.

writers, that it were a mere waste of words to attempt to prove it.

9. The fact, assumed in this question, even if it were strictly accurate, could not, we think, materially affect the object of our inquiry; for, considering how many centuries have elapsed since the *Cimbri* were expelled from the North of Europe, and considering also the intermixture of nations and tongues that has since taken place on the European continent, it could not be a subject of any great astonishment, if there really had been "no traces left of the *Cimbric* language in the names of the territories, which the people are known to have inhabited." Have we not a case in point in our own country, where, within a much shorter period, the primitive names of numberless places have given way to those imposed by the Saxons? Is not the term *England* itself a proof of the inconclusiveness of any argument founded on such a basis? In the same manner the ancient *Cimbric Chersonese* received the name of *Jutland* upon the expulsion of the original inhabitants by the *Jutæ*. But, what is the actual fact in the case before us? So far from there being now no traces of the language of the *Cimbri* in the names of places in the North of Europe, it has been maintained, that several instances of this nature are to be found along the course traversed by the *Cimbri* in their progress towards the West*; and, what is of yet more importance, the very language itself may be said to be still spoken in a part of the Prussian dominions, at no great distance from the ancient settlements of the *Cimbri*. At least, such is the general affinity of this tongue with the modern CYMRAEG, that there can be little doubt of

* Among many writers, who have investigated this point, we refer our correspondent to Mr. Roberts in his "Early History of the Cymry," Mr. Davies in his "Celtic Researches," p. 207, &c. and, above all, to M. Pezron in his "*Antiquité de la Langue et de la Nation des Celtes*," who does not hesitate to affirm, from the phenomena which present themselves in this respect, that the language, spoken by the aboriginal inhabitants of this island, must have been the same as that of the *Titans*, since the etymology of so many names of places, over which the empire of that people extended, may still be found in the languages of Wales and Brittany. To this presumed identity between the CYMRY and *Titans* what we have said in a preceding note may not be inapplicable. With reference to the particular subject of this note, we may also recommend to the reader's notice a curious communication, signed HANESAI, in a subsequent part of this Number.

their original identity *. With respect to the presumed derivation of *Cimbri* from the Gothic word *Kimber* †, it will be time enough to consider that, when the etymology, now under discussion, is proved to have no foundation. In the mean time we can hardly be expected to undertake the establishment of a negative.

10. In reply to this question, we have first to say, that there exists no positive testimony, that “the dispositions and habits of the CYMRY of Britain widely differed from those of the continental *Cimbri*.” It is certainly recorded in the *Triads*, that the CYMRY, under Hu Gadarn, established their dominion in this island “through justice and in peace ‡,” but this seems to have reference only to the priority of their arrival here and the consequent undisputed possession which they took of the country. For we have the authority of the same ancient records, that, before the settlement of the CYMRY, the island was inhabited only by wild beasts §. The *Triads*, therefore, cannot be said to prove any thing respecting “the dispositions and habits of the CYMRY,” in their memorial of this event, as it afforded no opportunity for “fighting and bloodshed;” and it deserves, on the other hand, to be noticed, that the Roman historians, who wrote from the best authority, represent the ancient inhabitants of this island as a warlike and brave people, while Taliesin distinctly ascribes to the first settlers a similar character ||. The Druidical or Bardic Institution, indeed, may have inculcated principles of a contrary tendency; but it is reasonable to presume, that these were confined to a privileged number, and had no more influence on the general habits of the people than the pacific doctrines of the Quakers of

* We here allude to the *Wendi*, respecting whom we have some curious documents, which we design to insert on some future occasion. See also CAMBRO-BRITON, vol. ii. p. 97, and No. 24, p. 80.

† Among other profound etymologies, which English writers have given of CYMRY, we may notice that of Cleland, who sagaciously informs us, that it is derived from “*kym*, one of the most ancient Celtic words for a mountain, a corruption of *kean* head, and which latter word is synonymous with *pen*.” *Ex uno disce omnes*.

‡ See CAMBRO-BRITON, vol. i. p. 47.

§ Id. *ibid*, p. 8.

|| See his Poem, entitled “*Ymarwar Lludd Bychan*.” Arch. of Wales, vol. i. p. 76.

these days could have upon the nation at large, or than the grand principles of Christianity itself appear to have, in this respect, on the general conduct of the Christian world. In a word, we can see no force whatever in this objection, since, at last, whatever difference of manners or character may have existed between the *Cimbri* of the North and the CYMRY of Britain might readily be accounted for by such local and circumstantial changes, as have occasioned a similar diversity amongst other nations, when once disunited from one common stock.

11. It is unnecessary to say much in answer to this question, as it appears to be little more than a summary of the writer's scepticism on the subject before us. We are ready to admit, however, that the identity of the CYMRY with the nations above specified ought not to rest merely on "the fortuitous coincidence of the name," but that it ought also have the sanction of history, as far as that sanction can now be obtained. And we hope it will, on the other hand, be conceded, that such historical testimony would tend materially to confirm the propriety of the etymology in dispute. For, if it could be reasonably shewn, that the CYMRY, *Cinmerii* and *Cimbri* were of one family, it would also appear, according to our view of the question, that the former are entitled, for one of the reasons above surmised, to the name of a FIRST OR PRIMITIVE PEOPLE. As a necessary corollary from this proof we conceive it would be farther evident, that *Cimbric* and not *Celtic*, as our correspondent contends, was the patronymic distinction of that class of nations of which we are speaking, and, consequently, that the term *Cimbric* has not been adopted merely "from the necessity of procuring support to an hypothetical etymology." In a word, it must be our business to shew, that this etymology does not depend on its plausibility only, but that it is also fortified by such historical and other reasonable evidence as belongs to the peculiar nature of the inquiry. Something, we trust, has already been done towards this end in the answers, we have now given to the "questions and doubts" of our correspondent: but we propose to resume the subject, in our next, in a more connected and methodical form. The length, to which this article has already been extended, compels us thus to postpone, contrary to our first intention, the full accomplishment of our design.

We ought not, however, to omit here to notice our correspondent's new etymologies, as he styles them, of CYMRU, LLOEGR, and ALBAN; and of the first two we must say, that we are not aware, by what philological torture they could be twisted to the meaning he would apply to them. But we deem it unnecessary to discuss this point, inasmuch as we conceive, that both the CYMRY and LLOEGRWYS were so called before their settlement in this island, and, consequently, that they gave their names, in time, to such portions of it as they respectively inhabited. That such was the fact with respect to the CYMRY we have already partially shewn and hope to prove more satisfactorily hereafter; and we have the authority of the Triads as to the LLOEGRWYS, whom they describe to have emigrated hither from Gascony, wherefore it is not improbable, that they may be identified with the ancient *Ligurians* *. With respect to ALBAN, we believe the etymology, given by our correspondent, to be correct; but he is wrong in stating it to be "now for the first time announced." It may be found in Mr. Owen's Dictionary, in the Cambrian Register †, and, we believe, in other publications connected with Wales.

CAMBRIANA.—No. IV.

OUR readers are aware, that the design of this article is the republication of occasional gleanings, connected with the literature, history, or manners of Wales. The following are extracted from the notes in a publication of *Miscellaneous Poems*, by Mr. R. Llwyd *, author of the admired poem of "Beaumaris Bay," and who is also justly celebrated for the researches he has made in the genealogical history of his native country.

WELSH FAIRIES.

"In Wales, as in other pastoral districts, the fairy tales are not yet erased from the traditional tablet; and age seldom

* See CAMBRO-BRITON, vol. i. p. 47.

† Vol. i. p. 24.

‡ Published at Chester in 1804.